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Scandal Fails to Stem CIA Recruiting, Webster Says

By JACK NELSON, *Times Washington Bureau Chief*

WASHINGTON—Despite the Marine spy scandal that rocked the American Embassy in Moscow, the CIA has been able to recruit "assets"—or spies—who are now in place in the Soviet Union, CIA Director William H. Webster declared Monday.

"I know that we're developing recruits inside Soviet Russia at the present time notwithstanding the embassy security problem," he said. "If you think anything would turn it off, it would be that expose where they show our embassy as a leaking sieve, but it hasn't stopped us."

The greatest risk of damage posed by the embassy spy scandal is not to the recruitment of spies but to the intelligence agencies of other countries that cooperate with the CIA, Webster said during a

lengthy breakfast session with The Times Washington Bureau.

"They are very sensitive about having their cooperation with us, or any other intelligence agency, become a matter of public knowledge," he said. "It goes on and it should go on, but often for political reasons inside those countries it is very embarrassing to them if they're seen to have any kind of association with us or any other intelligence agency, and we all have them."

Four Marines were charged with various offenses in connection with the Moscow Embassy spy scandal, but so far only Sgt. Clayton J. Lonetree has been convicted of espionage. All charges against two others, Cpl. Arnold Bracy and Cpl. Robert J. Williams, were dropped.

A military jury cleared Staff Sgt. Robert S. Stufflebeam of all major charges but convicted him of two counts of dereliction of duty for frequenting Moscow bars the military deemed off limits to Marines.

As the spy case unfolded earlier this year, U.S. officials also discovered that the new U.S. Embassy being built in Moscow was riddled with eavesdropping devices. President Reagan has vowed that the new building will not be occupied until he is convinced it is a secure

environment, and the State Department is considering a plan that calls for removing all listening devices and reconstructing the top five floors of the eight-story building.

Webster, who replaced the late William J. Casey as CIA director four months ago after serving nine years as FBI director, emphasized that human intelligence gathering is crucial even in the age of spy satellites and other spectacular technological advances.

"You can build your capability in the sky—and it's awesome what we're doing and what we need to do in the future—but it will not really faithfully tell you why people are doing things, what their intentions are and what their capabilities are," he said.

"Sometimes you get their intentions out of technical coverage, sometimes you can measure their capabilities based on imagery and how much you think they've produced and so on, but trying to understand the 'why' of it still is very much a human intelligence-gathering function."

Although college campuses have experienced a mild resurgence of the kinds of protests that dogged CIA recruitment officers in the 1970s, Webster said the agitation

mostly reflects disapproval of U.S. foreign policy. He said he does not sense "the passion of earlier days."

Despite some reports that the agency is experiencing recruitment problems because of the CIA's role in the Iran-*contra* scandal, Webster insisted that the agency is having little difficulty finding well-qualified recruits.

The CIA is receiving inquiries about possible employment at the rate of about 250,000 a year, he said. While declining to be more specific, he said that actual employment applications exceed 1,000 a month.

And the recruits rate high in quality as well as quantity, he said. He added that he recently met with a group of CIA recruits "said to have qualifications and skills and aptitudes approximately 10 times the threshold level for admission to Harvard College."

Considers Morale

Webster has come under criticism in Congress for not moving more quickly to oust or discipline CIA officials who cooperated with Casey in some covert actions related to the Iran-*contra* affair that violated agency rules or the law. But in the interview he insisted that he will not be pressured to move too quickly, for fear of ruining agency morale.

"I'm concerned internally about momentum," he said. "I've seen the destructive effect of house-cleaning and other types of tearing apart brick by brick efforts in agencies that depend on their esprit, because in the agency [CIA] you get very little credit publicly for the good things you do, and you only hear about the things you do wrong."

Webster said that he expects to make some personnel changes and perhaps take disciplinary action soon after an internal investigation

is completed about mid-November, but he declined to speculate on what his actions might involve.

He pointed out that when he was called upon to discipline 68 agents after becoming FBI director nine years ago, he moved slowly but deliberately. He said he "made a distinction between those who were carrying out specific instructions that they had no reason to believe were improperly given, or that their conduct was illegal, from those who were violating internal rules or regulations or who had every reason to believe and should have questioned what they were asked to do."

Seniority a Factor

Implying that high-level officials will be held to a higher standard of accountability, he said: "The higher the level of seniority, the greater the obligation to inquire about doubtful instructions."

When Casey directed the CIA, State Department officials and other policy-makers frequently com-

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plained that intelligence estimates were flawed because they had been "cooked" to fit his views of foreign policy. As a Cabinet member, Casey became directly involved in making foreign policy.

Webster, who declined to become a Cabinet member, said that policy-makers are now being supplied with "improved" intelligence estimates.

When the Iranian threat to American shipping in the Persian Gulf developed, he said, he supplied an intelligence estimate to Administration policy-makers and made it clear that "they can do whatever they want with the estimate—they can read it or not read it, use some of it or not use any of it, but the one thing they couldn't do was change it."

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